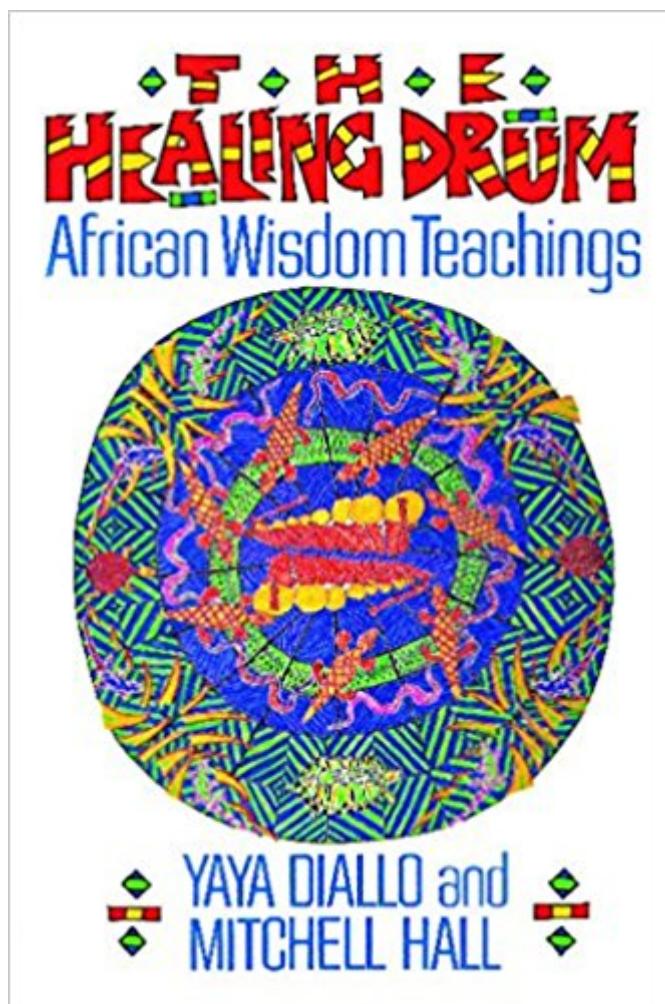


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# The Healing Drum: African Wisdom Teachings



## **Synopsis**

The Healing Drum traces the extraordinary cultural legacy of the Minianka tribe of West Africa, for whom music serves a sacred, healing function for the individual and society. The authors explore the Minianka view of humanity, music, and the cosmos relative to work, celebration, herbal medicine, dance, trance, initiation, and death. The first book of its kind, delivering a message of untapped wisdom and power from a little-known culture through the universal medium of music.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"The Healing Drum is more than a literary autobiography; it includes considerable ethnographic information about Minianka culture" (Shaman's Drum)"Together Diallo and Hall have collaborated to produce a text that combines anthropology, sociology, philosophy and music in a potent and thought-provoking read." (The Jazz Report)"This is not actually a scholarly book, but that is part of its strength: the subjects discussed in Part One, about Minianka culture as a whole, are those covered in standard ethnographic studies." (Ethnomusicology)"Part two provides examination of the more public role of music as a sacred healing practice in Minianka culture." (Timothy White, Editor of Shaman's Drum)"I have been searching for an authentic, traditional CD with chanting and singing, and now I have finally found it!" (Body Mind Spirit Magazine, October 2003)

Born and raised in Mali, West Africa into the Minianka (Bamana) tribe, Yaya Diallo learned to play balafon and hand drums under the instruction of his grandfather and spiritual mentor, Nangape.

This was a gift to a daughter who has been drumming for several years and has appreciated learning the background of the music she enjoys. She has learned a great deal through it and has shared it with other drummers in her group.

Other reviewers have mentioned much of what is laudable about this book. This is mostly a story of a childhood and youth in a highly traditional village in southern Mali, with some information on Yaya Diallo's life in Bamako, the capital, and in Canada. Not much specific information on drumming itself, as this is an autobiography and not a work of ethnomusicology. Particularly intriguing is Diallo's struggle, and his manifold transformations: seen as a fool and a good-for-nothing in his home village when he was a child, he becomes a star student (not without setbacks). Consequently, he settles into a materially satisfying, but spiritually impoverished existence as a chemist in Canada. Finally, in spite of the stridently modernist spirit of the times, which dictated that most elements of African culture be shed and that one's self become completely "Westernized", Diallo returns to drums, the most important and vital aspect of his culture and his individual self. Mocked and destitute for a while, he succeeds in establishing himself as a musician and as an instructor of drumming. There are several problematic points, but I will concentrate upon one. Having grown up in Christian and atheist household within a multiethnic society, in which people of Muslim origin constituted slightly less than half of the population, I am very sensitive to crude generalizations about religions and ethnicities. Diallo is able to perceive that within "animist" African cultures and within Canada and the so-called "West", there is wide range of sensitivities and individual ways to live. Yet, sadly, his view of Islam, which has existed for a thousand years in west Africa, is surprisingly childish and crude. He has no idea (or at least he feigns ignorance) of Sufi brotherhoods and their music and countless ways in which it is possible to be a Muslim and to be an African musician (remember Ali Farka Toure, Oumou Sangare, Youssou N'Dour?). Instead, Diallo claims that Salafi Saudi Islam (incidentally, propagated through generous American financial support in order to combat "communism" since the 1970s) is the only Islam that there is, and that accordingly Islam is bad, bad, bad. This may sound like music to some of his half-educated readers, but it is nonsense, not fit for an elder who has seen the world beyond his village. Had I known of this jarring matter, I would most likely have decided to peruse the book at my alma mater instead of buying it enthusiastically. To end on a kind note: The CD, which has to be bought separately (not expensive), is very pleasant indeed, although the pieces are very short and amount to samples. They are not discussed in the book explicitly, but I was listening to them while reading the book, creating a nice ambiance until the fatal

page 190 and its successor.

Everyone should read this!

did so enjoy this book

This book was very excellent in helping to understand our cultural morals and values i learn and gain much insight very glad i made the purchase!

Required reading for Drumming class, it is a very insightful story about a drummer who achieves fame and his experiences with his village.

wonderfull!service, quality and price

This book is about music, healing, indigenous view of life and above all, it is about harmony, which is achieved when life is lived with respect and with generosity. Diallo is a member of the mainly agricultural Minianka/Senufo tribe living in what today is Mali. The Minianka have been able to resist the depredations which occur when Islam or Christianity enters African societies; they are animist, that is, they still observe and follow ancient laws that emphasize the interdependence between humans, nature and the transcendent realms. Music to the Minianka music is much more than entertainment. It is used for work, celebration, ritual, initiations, funerals and healing; each activity (as well as each profession and each person) has its own special rhythms and harmonies. The Minianka understand music as a bridge between the visible and invisible. As such, it is used to establish harmonious relationships between an individual, his community, his ancestors and the Creator. Every night there is dancing at the village square - and EVERYBODY dances. Minianka musicians learn to transpose the essence of their fellow men's characters into music, so that when a villager gets to dance, he is greeted by rhythms which match his/her character and emotional configuration. By observing closely, the musicians can adapt the music to the needs of the listener and thereby lead them to health. In Minianka villages, says Diallo, "musicians are healers, the healers musicians.... Music...amplifies to our sense the unheard tones and unseen waves that weave together the matter of existence. The beat, the rhythm, the timing, the orchestration, the flow, the balance between action and rest must all be within well-defined limits...and the music becomes a healing art that helps restore emotionally and psychologically disturbed people to harmonious human functioning.

"The book is well written and brings us a close -up of Fieno, the village of Diallo's childhood. I found the descriptions of initiation ceremonies, daily work, secret societies very interesting. It made me see the Minianka society as an extremely sophisticated - where there is place for everyone and where everybody is interconnected in a web of mutual obligations between people, spirits and God. Unfortunately, the interdependence on mutual obligations makes the African society also fragile; when reciprocity inherent in such webs is interrupted, as during incursions of oil and diamond money, radical Christianity or Islam, the African society collapses and we get what we see today in Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Liberia or Sudan - lack of harmony and lack of peace. Still, we would be fools to pass the opportunity to learn what Africans have to teach us. Music is one of the keys that can open the door of the gilded cage in which the giant of industrial nihilism has imprisoned us and Yaya Diallo shows us in this wonderful book, that it is possible to open one's body, spirit and destiny to the amazing world of harmony and beauty where true healing occurs.

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